

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE

Science and Arts.

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 434.

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1862.

PRICE 1½d.

## LAVATER AND PHYSIOGNOMY.

THE practice of physiognomy is as old as it is universal. Everybody judges by faces, is attracted or repelled by looks; even dogs discriminate a kind from an unkind glance, and their friends from their foes among strangers. Physiognomy is a common instinct, whose laws it is easier to practise than to define. You like that face; why? You say that tree is beautiful; why? The ready answer is the woman's reason: Because I do. That is a reason, however, which satisfies no thinker, and a science of faces has been the attempt of philosophers more frequently than even a science of beauty. It is said that physiognomy was cultivated as a science in old Egypt and India, and that Pythagoras imported it from Egypt to Greece. Certain it is that seekers for entrance to a Pythagorean school were subjected to a physiognomical examination, on the result of which their success depended. Plato and Aristotle speak largely of the face and body as signs and expressions of the mind. Cicero, too, had a faith in physiognomy. Amongst the Romans, indeed, it became a profession, mixed up, however, with divination and various superstitions. Suetonius relates that Narcissus employed a physiognomist to examine the features of Britannicus, and to predict from them. In the middle ages, physiognomy absorbed great attention, and, down to the middle of last century, was every now and then breaking into a fashionable study, under the impulse of some enthusiastic practitioner or other. It is quite amazing to find how much ancient, middle, and modern age thought has been expended on a science which now a days we hear so little of, and that little only in connection with Lavater.

Any year in the last quarter of last century, had you been travelling in Switzerland, you must needs have visited Zurich, were it for nothing else than to see Lavater, who, in right of a European celebrity, was the lion of that quaint little city, in which he was born in 1741, in which he lived and laboured, and in 1801 died, a thorough Zurich man. Easily accessible, you would visit him if possible at his house, and if not, hear him preach in St Peter's, or catch a glimpse of him in the streets. You would see a spare figure, a face feminine in its delicacy, alive with spirituality and intelligence, and suffused with an overflowing tenderness. Keen, enthusiastic, vivacious,

impulsive, reverent, credulous, and gentle as a child, was Lavater; a man of prodigious industry; versatile, yet methodical; concerned with many things, yet keeping each to its hour and place, and giving to each his whole heart. He kept up an immense correspondence, wrote books, wrote poetry, meddled with politics, preached and visited, and accomplished an amount of work which those who knew neither his energy nor his system would have pronounced incredible. To his pastoral duties he devoted himself as though they were his sole care, and with great success. By his flock, he was esteemed and loved, and the simple country people in his walks used to draw near and kiss his hands. It was common to speak of him as the German Fenelon, and between Fenelon and Lavater there were many points of resemblance both mental and physical. In Fenelon, however, there was a measured composure and quiet which did not belong to the restless, bustling, aggressive Swiss. One day, Madame de Staël was walking with him, when a German lady accosted them, and exclaimed: 'How our dear Lavater resembles Fenelon! Don't you see in him Fenelon's features, his air, his character! He is indeed Fenelon over again; and yet Fenelon with a little of the Swiss!' The lady was right, had she said, 'with a great deal of the Swiss.'

As theologian, as poet, as preacher, as politician, Lavater did not acquire his universal fame, but from a pursuit which, contrasted with what he esteemed the business of his life, he called his 'pipe and tobacco.' A man delicately organised like Lavater has usually an acute sense of character; the presence of those he likes is an exquisite pleasure, and of those he dislikes, an exquisite pain; sensations which, to a man of coarser fibre, are either incredible or incomprehensible. As Lavater advanced in life, he began to exercise his reason on his sensations, and to record, compare, and arrange them. He collected portraits on all hands, tested his own opinions on them with those of his friends, and soon became known as an adept in divining character from the face, body, and manners. He drew his conclusions not from the face alone, but from the whole of a man's surroundings—from his dress, his gait, his handwriting, his furniture; holding that the mind expressed itself not only in the body, but in everything affected by its influence. He told Goethe, that in carrying round the velvet-bag in church as collector

of offerings, he observed the hands, and from the form and action of the fingers he had a vivid idea of the character of each donor. In the course of 1775-8, he published a work on physiognomy in five quartos in German, and entitled *Essays on Physiognomy, designed to promote the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*. Upon the numerous engravings which illustrated the *Essays*, he bestowed extraordinary pains, employing the best artists he could find to execute them. The great cost of the work, and the low price at which he persisted in selling it, brought him into serious pecuniary difficulties. Its sale was, however, great, and the interest it evoked speedily became universal with educated society. A French edition was soon in demand, and Lavater himself produced it in 1781-7, making the translation with fastidious care. The *Essays* were not translated into English until 1798, when the work was completed in a style equal to the original five quartos, by the Rev. Henry Hunter, D.D., minister of the Scots church, London Wall. Holloway did most of the engravings, and Fuseli, who was Lavater's comrade and townsman, contributed a preface, and assisted Dr Hunter with his artistic advice. Holcroft also translated and abridged the *Essays*, and reproduced the illustrations in a cheaper form. By Holcroft's translation, Lavater is most widely known in England, and its sale continues to this day; but whoever would know Lavater fairly should see Hunter's superb volumes, or his own German or French editions. Pleasanter table-books, over which to spend those odd, waiting half-hours which are now and then imposed upon us, could scarcely be desired. The pictures are often worth looking at for themselves, and there is employment in testing your own impressions concerning the faces against Lavater's in the text.

The interest and enthusiasm awakened by Lavater's work might be described as a mania. From court to cottage, everybody took to face-reading. In parts of Germany, no servant was engaged unless her face bore the signs attributed to honesty, industry, and good temper. In some towns, the popular inquisition of faces became so intolerable, that sensitive people wore masks when they went abroad. For such extravagances, Lavater was not to be held accountable. His own powers, he confessed, were limited to a humbler range; his wife, he used to say, was a better physiognomist than himself, although she knew nothing of his rules. His great work, his *Essays*, he did not set forth as a rounded system, but only as 'a series of fragments.' He says: 'I do not promise, for it would be the height of folly to promise, to give entire the immense alphabet necessary to decipher the original language of nature written on the face of man and the whole of his exterior; but I flatter myself that I have been so happy as to trace a few of the characters of that divine alphabet, and that they will be so legible that the sound eye will readily distinguish them whenever they occur. I here firmly declare that I never will, nor can write a complete treatise on the science of physiognomies. My ambition is limited to a few simple essays, and the fragments which I give never can compose a whole.' With some faces, he owns himself baffled. 'At the moment I write, there are some countenances upon which it is impossible for me to pronounce judgment, while at the same time there are many others about which I am able to decide with a certainty equal to that which I have of my own existence.' Again, he gave no reason to hope that what skill he had he could communicate to others. Here, too, we may quote his own words: 'No one whose person is not well formed can become a good physiognomist. Those painters were the best whose persons were the handsomest. Rubens, Vandyck, and Raphael, possessing three gradations of beauty, possessed three gradations of the genius of painting. The scarcity of human

beauty is the reason why physiognomy is so much derided, and finds so many opponents. No person ought, therefore, to enter the sanctuary of physiognomy who has a debased mind, an ill-formed forehead, a blinking eye, or a distorted mouth.' We may smile at these curious dicta, but they prove that whilst Lavater's *Essays* were the occasion, they were not the cause of the physiognomical *furor* which for a time overspread Europe; many who were accounted his disciples would have found themselves disowned by the teaching of their reputed master.

Lavater was now famous, and Zurich became a court where travellers from every part came to pay their respects, and consult the wonderful man. Popular rumour exaggerated his powers, and many resorted to him as a sort of respectable fortune-teller, to examine their faces, and tell them what they were, and what they could do. Lovers brought portraits to know his opinion; so did the jealous, the inquisitive, and the suspicious, that he might confirm their hopes or fears. The trouble of these inquiries was very great; but Lavater possessed an unwearied patience, an unbounded kindness, and he strove to satisfy all. He was exceedingly loquacious, had a passion for giving advice, and correspondence was his delight. It is said that he seldom wrote less than three thousand letters annually. With such temper and powers, the plague of querists was not at all so intolerable as it would have proved to most men. Besides, it must be owned that Lavater was not without a large share of vanity, and the unceasing tribute of attention rendered by men of every rank, from kings and philosophers to the peasantry round Zurich, was far from ungrateful. Exhausted by its own follies, Lavater lived to see the fashionable rage for physiognomy die out. His faith in his own powers of discrimination greatly abated in his later years. Impulsive and credulous, many judgments he pronounced in enthusiasm, events falsified; and, sincere and open-hearted, he was the first to confess and profit by the teaching of experience. Beyond question, he possessed a keen perception of character, but his skill was an instinct more than a science, and it was a vain attempt to write it out in rules. As well might Mr Tennyson try to teach us how to entangle poetry in verses. Hence his *Essays* are devoid of any amount of practicable instruction, and have fallen into neglect. They are reveries over faces more than anything else; and in reading them, we are interested and amused with Lavater personally, and his curious, high-flown, mystical opinions, having early discovered that he is no help as a guide. In all his writing about faces, there is scarce one original, practical observation which can serve for common use. In comparing the pictures with the opinions in his *Essays*, very frequent and emphatic will be your dissent, especially if you have any acquaintance with phrenology. His rhapsody over a portrait of Frederick the Great, however, anticipates, and would gratify Mr Carlyle.

Many difficulties, as Lavater admitted, lay in the way of a science of physiognomy. Character is very subtle, and its indications are appreciated, as has been observed, far more by an incommunicable instinct than by a science which can be written out. The broad expressions of feeling, as joy, sorrow, anger, perplexity, all recognise, and the theatre depends upon this common knowledge; but the finer shades and crossings of character are only perceptible to high, delicate, and sensitive organisations. Women, as a rule, are better physiognomists than men. How many a husband might have been saved from mischief, or wreck and ruin, had he listened to his wife's warning: 'I don't like that man; and I wish you had nothing to do with him!' Indeed, the sense of character in some women is so acute as to seem almost infallible. In others again, men and women, it is blunt to deadness; they never seem to know any one deeper than his words; and on them, looks,

tones, air, and gestures are lost. Good discerners of character, as was the case with Lavater, usually make their truest estimate at a first meeting, when at a right distance they can see the man in that broad comprehensive view which is lost as soon as familiarity sinks them into valleys of detail. For this reason, we all find it much more difficult to characterise our friends than our acquaintances.

In children, all the emotions pass freely into expression in the face; but their earliest lesson is restraint expressed in the nurse's terror: 'Oh, if so and so saw you, what would he say?' By and by, we get over blushing, and learn to look gratified when we are bored, to attend when we would yawn, to appear pleased when we are cross, to keep quiet when we are angry, unmoved when we would weep, or hurrah and dance for joy. At last, when matured in politeness and discretion, our faces become masks which less express than hide thought. Great powers of concealment are given us; the muscles of the face are in two transverse layers; and whilst the inner may be convulsed with feeling, the outer may be ruled by the will into calmness, or even into smiles. Besides, our characters are so composite, passion and reason, love and self-love, right and wrong, so conflicting, that if the emotions wrote themselves without hindrance into the outer muscles, who could disentangle and read aright their jagged, broken lines?

Whilst these and other difficulties have been adduced in all times against the possibility of a science of physiognomy, yet without presuming to decipher the inmost subtleties of character from the lines of the face, there are many facts about faces corresponding to facts about mind, which if systematised, would form a useful and interesting science. Since Lavater's day, phrenologists have taught us numberless truths about the form of the head, concerning which he pronounced many erroneous opinions. Far more, too, is known about the temperaments and the nervous structures they indicate; and a host of important physiological facts have been brought to light since he wrote. As the brain is now the admitted organ of the mind, and as the body and its organs are projections from the brain, we may readily perceive how the mind may be studied and illustrated from the body, even as a cause is in its effects. For this reason, we see character expressed in the hand as decisively as in the face; and fortune-telling by the hand, in common with many other superstitions, has a basis in reason. Painters have too often forgotten the meaning there is in hands. Vandyck actually used to paint in his hands, not from his sitters, but from stock models, his own very often. Look at his portraits, and you cannot fail to observe a striking incongruity in many instances between the hands and face. Look, again, at Titian's portrait of Paul IV., and see how face and hands match each other; how the face of the grasping old man is answered in the clutching, spiny hands with nails like claws.

A remarkable phenomenon in physiognomy is the representation of the animal kingdom in the human face; the appearance therein of almost every beast that walks, and bird that flies, as well as of some reptiles and fishes. How often do we come across countenances which suggest a horse or a cow, a sheep or a pig, a rabbit or a goat, a lion or a tiger, a monkey or an eagle, a crane or a magpie, a crow or an owl. The problem for science is, whether, in such cases, there is not a development of brain corresponding to the animal expressed in the face. Certainly we expect courage in a man with a lion-face, acuteness with an eagle-face, cunning with a fox-face, softness with a sheep-face, omnivorous gluttony with a pig-face, and are generally not mistaken. Sometimes we see two animals gliding into union in one face, and distinctly revealed under varying feelings. The fox and the sheep are often so blended together, indicating a gentle

slyness; also, the sheep with the lion; in repose, such a face is lamb-like, but in indignation at wrong the lamb vanishes, and the lion appears.

The puzzle to the physiognomist, it is said, is the common-place face—the face that expresses little or nothing; yet here physiognomy is justified, for a common-place face is the face of common-place ordinary man. Looking over the portraits of men who have risen above their fellows, who have blessed, cursed, or influenced their race, we find no common-place faces—none whose visages are beneath their greatness. Napoleon thought a large nose a mark of strength of character; so it is; but not alone the nose, but all the features are well developed in men of mark and vigour. A small and insignificant face is unknown to greatness; in saying so, we only claim with the phrenologist a large brain, which manifests itself in a corresponding countenance.

None will deny that character is expressed in the face and body; the only doubt is as to the possibility of the skill that can read its complex and intertwined signs with any certainty. Lavater did not cultivate physiognomy in the scientific spirit which alone can discover and secure truths for mankind. If any one would give to physiognomy the labour and genius Gall gave to the brain, and Professor Owen has given to comparative anatomy, there is little question but valuable results would be attained. He would have the world with him for sympathetic and admiring students, for we are all curious about one another, and ready to take stock of each other's attainments and possibilities. One of Lavater's constant difficulties was in careless and incorrect portraits: now we have photography, we can not only study the living at our leisure as they are, but can obtain faithful transcripts of the best pictures of men famous and infamous who have passed from earth.

#### MY FIRST AND LAST PARTNER.

MRS MAJOR C—— was known to most of the good society of Bath within the last twenty years as one of the latest representatives of the world of beauty and fashion which existed in George III.'s time. In her youth, she had seen Garrick, sat to Reynolds, and been presented to Horace Walpole. In later years she had helped to make up rubbers at Mrs Piozzi's card-parties, heard court-gossip from Cornelia Knight, and sat silent, as all mortals were compelled to do, under the mighty and magniloquent tongue of Madame d'Arblay. Having seen and heard so much, Mrs Major C—— was a great authority in all that regarded the bygone generation. Like most of the ladies she had outlived, her faculties were kept in good repair to the last; she was cheerful, social, and in a manner active, up to fourscore, ready for all amusements, inclined to youthful dressing, and very determined to have her say. Mrs Major C—— had been lively all her days, a bit of a coquette of the harmless kind; she had been known to carry on a flirtation in her seventieth year, and is traditionally said to have rouged for the last party at which she ever appeared. The old lady had lived in good, or at least in gay, company from her youth; she had seen Bath at the head of its profession as a watering-place, she had seen it decline before the rising glory of Brighton; but at Bath her head-quarters continued to be for more than half a century; and one of the traditions of the place was, that Mrs Major C—— had never been seen at a ball, or known to enter a room where dancing was going on, if she could help it.

This was a singular whim or antipathy for a lady otherwise so lively; yet the fact had been handed down from her contemporaries, and was confirmed by later experience. Mrs Major C—— had never danced, so far as anybody knew, nor ever cared to look at dancing. There were a dozen strange tales to account for it; the most of which had come out



of Gloucestershire, her native county, and varied between accidents to her own toes and the breaking of somebody's heart. The old lady had never thought proper to set her friends right on the subject; their endeavours to ferret out an explanation had been politely foiled at many a quiet tea-table and friendly call. But few people care to die with their secret untold; and after sixty-three years of discreet silence, Mrs Major C— chose, in her eightieth winter, to reveal hers one evening to a small group of intimates, young and old, who had gathered round her genial fireside, got into familiar talk, and by some accidental words, which, though one of the company, I did not observe at the time, and cannot recall now, unlocked that dark closet of the old lady's memory.

'I was never at a ball but once,' said she, leaning back in her easy-chair, 'and I never wanted to go to another, which you may think strange, for I was just seventeen when that one came off; but it happens to be true, and as the folks are all dead and gone that were concerned in it, I will tell you the story. I was brought up in the Forest of Dean, where my father was a country squire, but, unlike the county gentry of that day, both he and my mother were strict Methodists. We lived in a fine old Hall, pleasantly situated on the side of a wooded hill sloping down to the Severn. The seats and mansions of the county gentry lay all around. They were social in the Forest then, whatever they may be now; there were hunts and picnics, Christmas parties and birthday balls. We had always been reckoned among the county families, and not one of the least consideration, I can tell you, for the Hall and lands had been ours before the Reformation. The best of them would have been willing to have us for associates; but my father and mother considered all sports and merry-makings as so many byways to the kingdom of darkness. No earthly power could persuade the one to join the hunt, or the other to appear at anything but a serious party. When a company of strolling players happened to visit the neighbourhood—there were no other theatricals to be found in the Forest at that time—they never rested till the whole troop and their profane devices were got out of it for some infraction of parish rules or ordinances. Picnics were bad, parties were bad, plays were bad, but by far the worst—in short, the high road to Satan, in their reckoning—was a ball.

I was their only daughter out of seven children, and much indulged in a pious way; yet for me to mention, much less expect to attend, such a gathering of sin as a dancing-party, would have drawn down upon me their fiercest indignation, and most abundant lecturing. We had no company at the Hall but Wesleyan preachers on their rounds; two or three serious farmers of the better sort, whom my parents called brethren; and a couple of reduced gentlewomen. These last were old maids, and also devout Methodists, and my mother set them before my youth as examples of all that was praiseworthy. I have no doubt they were excellent women, and so most certainly was my mother, though she mistook, as many otherwise good and honest people have done, narrow-minded asceticism for piety, and the necessary recreations and enjoyments of life for sin.

No merry-makings were allowed, or even talked of in our house, but, nevertheless, I had a knowledge that such things existed. The majority of our relations, numerous as they were in Gloucestershire, had grown cool, or been quarrelled with on account of Methodism; but we had an aunt with two grown daughters, living in the Cathedral Close, in the ancient city of Gloucester, with whom a correspondence was still maintained. My aunt was a widow with rather limited means. My two cousins, Grace and Alice, were handsome girls, taller than myself, some years older, anxious about their looks, their society, and their settlements. When my aunt and cousins visited

at our house, they were always serious, wore high dark-coloured dresses, plain bonnets, and no curls. They could all talk a good deal of Methodism too, though I don't know how they learned it; but when the girls and I were alone together, they gave me such accounts of the plays, parties, and balls they attended in Gloucester, that I thought them the happiest people in Europe. Whatever young folks hear of their neighbours having, which they themselves have not, they are apt to crave after—the taste of the forbidden fruit, I suppose; and this was deep in my mind, in spite of the serious bringing up, and the good example I had in the old maids. My mother knew nothing about it; the gay revelations imparted to me by Grace and Alice were given under promise of strict secrecy from mamma, which, besides being bound in honour to keep, was a necessary condition of hearing any more of the kind; and no forbidden novel could give greater delight to the heart of a boarding-school girl than did those private reports of the Gloucester *beau monde* to mine. I don't think my mother was quite convinced of the genuineness of their piety; my aunt's husband had been a canon; there was a brother of hers still in the church; but still the whole family came seriously to the Hall, and executed every kind of small commission for her in Gloucester, which was our chief town. So my mother hoped they were edified by the Wesleyan preachers, invited them on long visits, and sent them well-filled hampers from the orchard, the poultry-yard, and the dairy. In return, she went to see them sometimes—not often, for my mother was a great stayer at home, and her time was much occupied with the poor and the travelling preachers. The doubts I have referred to made her unwilling to let me visit them, except in her own company, when we always found the high dresses on, hymn-books on the table, and the whole house in a state of great sobriety. There was nothing else to be looked for in the presence of mamma, and no going without her for me, until a certain lucky chance, as I thought it, furnished the long-coveted opportunity.

I had caught a severe cold at the beginning of the winter; the cough clung to me week after week; my poor mother grew anxious about me; and our family doctor advised my removal from the cold bleak air of the Forest to that warmer part of Gloucestershire called the Vale, where the town of Gloucester stands. My aunt happened to be visiting us at the time; and, to my boundless joy and gratitude, she at once suggested her own house as the most suitable sojourn. There was no place in all the Vale so warm and sheltered as the Cathedral Close—such a genteel, such a quiet neighbourhood, where nothing was to be heard but the playing of the organ and the singing of psalms. Sophy would get quite rid of her cough there, and they would teach her that new sampler-stitch. It would do beautifully to work the slippers for that dear, good, moving man, Mr Grimshaw—a powerful preacher, with a Yorkshire twang, to whom my mother had taken a special fancy. My cough increased amazingly after the making of that proposal, and it succeeded in overcoming my mother's scruples against the Cathedral Close. I was allowed to return with my aunt, enjoined to get quit of the cold, learn the sampler-stitch, and not allow myself to be led into frivolities. Of course, I promised everything, and so did my aunt; and to do us both justice, we had some intention of keeping at least the letter of our promises. Things went on very soberly for some time after my arrival in Gloucester; my aunt and cousins thought seriousness a good thing, and wanted to please my mother. I saw the sights of the quiet old town, the castle, the mineral wells, the Assembly Rooms—that is to say, the outside of them; and matters went on in the strictest line of duty till about the middle of December, when the whole family got an invitation to Lady Tracy's ball.

I shall never forget their faces round the breakfast-table when the maid brought in the note. "Left by Lady Tracy's footman, mum," said she. My aunt broke the seal, read it first to herself, then handed it to Alice, who read and passed it on to Grace: she was always the proudest of being in good society, and before anybody could stop her, read it aloud.

"You'll never have sense, Grace," said her mother.

"Where is the use in making a secret of it? You know we must go, and we will go. Wasn't it kind of her to invite Sophy?" said triumphant Grace.

Yes, I had been invited; with my own ears, I heard that Lady Tracy would be happy to see the young relative who, she understood, was now a visitor at their house.

"It was kind of her," said my aunt, having got over the first shock of it; "and I'll allow it would be a nice opportunity for Sophy to see genteel life; but what would her mother say?"

"She needn't know anything about it," said Alice. That suggestion broke down the last barrier of conscience between me and the denounced frivolities. To see a real ball at the house of a Gloucester fashionable—to look on the dresses, to hear the music, to behold the dancing, to go down to supper, and up to the minuet, as my cousins had so often described these things, was too strong a temptation to be resisted by the virtue of seventeen.

"I am sure mamma need not know," said I; "and I should so like to go just this once, if you will let me, aunt." I felt the tears coming into my own eyes; I knew my cousins liked me, and my aunt was good-natured to a fault.

"I don't think it any harm myself, and I wouldn't stand against your going, Sophy," she said; "but, my dear, you have no ball-dress; there is scarcely time to get one, and I am sure your mother would not allow the money for it."

"O dear, we forgot that," said Grace and Alice, with uncommonly blank faces. I knew they had nothing to spare, and would find it rather difficult to get their own finery up; but resources were always my first thought. I pulled out the little purse containing all my pocket-money, and emptied it on the tablecloth.

"Only two guineas and a half," said the keen-sighted Grace; "my dear, that would never do. Your mother might have allowed you more than that, coming to Gloucester; but she can't, I suppose, giving so much to those Methodist preachers. But stay a minute. Mamma, might not Sophy get a dress quite cheap and good enough for the one evening from Mrs Jenkins the wardrobe-woman? Miss Smithson's maid told our Sally that she got that beautiful gauze we saw at the quadrille-party there."

"I dare say she might, and we could make it fit her; but I am afraid Sophy can't dance," said my aunt.

It was true I could not; the exercise in question being regarded as a special piece of the Old Serpent's policy, had been of course forbidden to me; but Grace had not exhausted her expedients.

"Never mind; I'll teach her a minuet, that easy one they call Mecklenburg—Queen Charlotte's, you know—she'll learn it in no time. Alice, you'll write to accept the invitation. Sophy and I will go off to Mrs Jenkins's; I want a bit of lace to make us tuckers and trim your cap, mamma; but I should like to see her frock got first."

My active cousin and I repaired to Mrs Jenkins's shop: it was a very respectable one of the kind; the good woman boasted that she bought and sold nothing but real gentry's clothes. Grace had many tales of the beautiful things quite new and got for half nothing by her acquaintances of limited means; and under her management, I obtained an amber-coloured taffeta, trimmed with purple satin. It was rather a conspicuous dress, but fashionably made, not the least soiled, and almost a perfect fit. Mrs Jenkins said she

would not have let it go so cheap, but there were very few it would answer; the young lady who wore it first must have been uncommonly slender, as I was then, but she added: "I don't know who it was; the dress came to me by an honest poor woman who gathers the like for me through the country; and I think she got it somewhere up in Somersetshire, at the house of a clergyman; so you see it's quite respectable."

We returned in triumph to the Cathedral Close. My dress was pronounced a decided bargain, and quite the thing for Lady Tracy's ball. It certainly was a surprising fit; and my aunt and cousins agreed that its original owner, if the dress became her at all, must have resembled me in complexion as well as in figure, for the strongly contrasted colours suited me exactly. We had a deal more to think of in the ten days of preparation then allowed for first-class assemblies; there were the tuckers, the lace lappets, the washes for our faces, the red heels of our shoes to be looked to. I think we had all twinges of conscience, too, for the deceit about to be practised on my mother; they should have been worst with me, but I had Queen Charlotte's minuet to learn—*Minuet de Mecklenbourg*, as the French dancing-master called it. I never knew how Grace got him bribed or coaxed (for I am sure he was not paid) to come over one or two evenings from his seminary in the next street, and give me a private lesson, by way of finishing off her efforts. I learned the minuet even to his satisfaction. I got reconciled, by help of frequent practice at the glass, to my own appearance in the amber and purple; I got my conscience quieted also even to the wearing of rouge, indispensable for good company at that period; I got my hair dressed the night before, as everybody did for balls; and sat up with my cousins till the morning, that the gummed curls might get time to dry, and keep properly in their places, which never required less than four-and-twenty hours. How easily people dress and go to balls in these days; and how odd one would look with those tiers of gummed curls, mounted on stiff wires, and pads of horse-hair; yet there was something grand and worth looking at in that old style; it made one a foot taller. Ladies did look ladies then, with their towering head-dresses, open skirts, brocaded petticoats, and high red heels. Don't laugh, girls, your own fashionable evening-dresses will look quite as queer to your grandchildren. But to go on with my story. We sat up all night—I mean my cousins and self, for my aunt, being in the dowager class, did not require such a high gumming, and could go to bed. Half the time we talked, the rest we read Miss Burney's novel, *A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*; it was the great work of the day, and had got the length of Gloucester, where, let me tell you, there was a good deal of gentility, and Lady Tracy was reckoned to stand at the head of it. My cousins told me so much about her in the days of preparation and the night of curl-drying, that I knew all her history as well as any of the towns-people, and the subsequent events at her ball stamped it on my memory. She was not only connected with the best of the county families, but famous for a kind of hereditary talent, said to be possessed by all the ladies of her line, for managing mankind in general, and those of her own house in particular.

The lady was a Tracy by birth as well as by marriage. By the by, it is a very old name in Gloucestershire. Her late husband, Sir Edward, had been also her cousin. The Tracys had a habit of marrying their cousins; people were not sure whether it was pride or prudence that got them into it, but Sir Edward had died many years before, leaving one daughter and one son. The son was by five years the younger; he was heir to the title and estate; but the latter was not large. The Tracys had always lived handsomely, and never would condescend to do anything that might improve

their property, because it looked like trade or business, which they counted entirely beneath them; and the property was heavily encumbered with Lady Tracy's jointure, a provision for her maiden sister, Miss Tracy, who had always lived in the house, and a marriage-portion for the daughter, Miss Agnes.

It was therefore thought requisite that young Sir Edward—they kept that name in the family from one generation to another—should look out for a fortune with his bride. His mother undertook that business, as she did everything else; for according to the belief of all Gloucester, there was nothing in the way of management her ladyship could not do and had not done. From the poorest cottager to the richest farmer on the estate, from the greengrocer and the milkman in town, up to Sir Edward and all his relations, Lady Tracy had ruled, directed, and governed them and their affairs. Her maiden sister, Miss Tracy, was generally allowed to be a considerable help. Miss Agnes had been 'brought out' for some years, and was also an acknowledged assistant. Among the three, young Sir Edward was believed to be the best managed man in the west country; they had sent him to school, they had sent him to college, they had told him what to do at all times and places, they had seen that he did it, and they had determined on marrying him to Lady Sarah Harvey, one of the Bristol family, and a great fortune; by the by, they said it came from an uncle in the West Indies the Harveys were not at all proud of. It was whispered Lady Sarah had been born somewhere in that quarter; and whether she had a right to the title or not, everybody gave her credit for woolly hair, an unusually dark complexion, and a decidedly African nose. This lady Sir Edward was appointed to marry by his managing mother, aunt, and sister. She was believed to be nothing loath. Sir Edward was tall, fair complexioned, and handsome, as all the Tracys had been; his family was old and good, and maybe Lady Sarah could not do better. In short, the marriage was a settled thing; the town gossips were sure it would come off very soon, for the bridegroom-elect had passed his majority two years, and nothing but his having been abroad making the grand tour was thought to have postponed the happy day. The Tracys—that is to say, the three ladies—had read his letters from Rome, Florence, and Venice to their admiring friends, and given splendid details of his reception in the best salons of Paris—the wits that had complimented, the duchesses that had been smitten by him, the routs given in his honour by nobles and ambassadors. People did not believe the whole of it; the tales were sometimes over-grand; but everybody was certain that Sir Edward had been seeing the world, and learning foreign fashions, ever since his twentieth year, when he left Cambridge rather abruptly.

There was concerning that a story which the Tracys did not tell; it had never been more than whispered about in Gloucester, for the dread of the managing ladies lay heavy on the minds of its most devoted gossips. It was now all but forgotten; but the substance was, that the daughter of a portrait-painter, much employed by university men, had made an impression, nobody could say how deep, on the heart of the son and heir. They had got acquainted somehow in sittings; they had been seen taking quiet walks together; the confidential friends of both parties had been heard to talk of an engagement, with exchange of rings and vows, to be fulfilled when young Tracy was Sir Edward and his own master. But the three at home got scent of the secret, it was thought from his college tutor, who knew the family had a living to bestow, and sadly wanted one, being long in orders and out of place. They had all three business in Cambridge directly, made Edward shew them over the university, went and sat to the painter for their portraits, contrived to get acquainted with him in a patronising way, took a

deep interest in his daughter; she was the eldest of ten children, I believe. They had very private talk with her and her parents about risks that young people ran in a university town, the deceitfulness of men, and the necessity of getting her settled; in short, they talked the poor people into their way of thinking. It was rather quickly done, I'll allow; but high-handed gentry could do a deal more at that time than they can at present; and before the three Tracys came back to Gloucester, the painter's daughter was married to Edward's college tutor, and packed off with him to the family living. How far the young man took it to heart could not be ascertained; but he left college some weeks after, though it was the middle of the term, and went on his travels to make the grand tour.

He had been nearly three years absent, and as many months at home, when the ball was given in honour of his birthday. It fell on the 21st of December, the shortest day in all the year, but one which I have remembered long enough, and not without good cause. The festival was held at the family town-house. West-country gentry kept town-houses in Gloucester then; it was an older and better established place than Bath, and thought more genteel than Bristol, because there was not so much trading there. Tracy House was reckoned one of the finest. Some tradesmen have got better houses now; but it had stood for more than two hundred years in Old Vale Street, substantially built of brick, and consisting of four low stories, the company-rooms on the first floor, all but the ball-room, which was on the ground, and partitioned off the kitchen; so the dancers got a knowledge of what they might expect for supper; but it was a known fact that Lady Tracy spared no expense on wax-candles, cut flowers, and the best chalkers.

After sitting up the night before, and dozing most of the day on our chairs, we got our curls as dry and stiff as heart could wish. My aunt said she never saw heads in better order after the washes, the dressing, the rouging. This last went most against my conscience, but it had to be done, and when it was done I felt certain my mother would not have known me. Our toilets were pronounced complete by half-a-dozen old friends who gathered in to drink tea and admire us. Our chairs were called, and for the first time in my life I went in a sedan to meet good company. I need not tell you what a bustle there was in Old Vale Street; a ball in those days upset not only the neighbourhood, but the entire town. The chairmen pushing, swearing, and occasionally fighting with their poles; the clusters of heads thrust out at every window and door; the crowd of inferior people in the street making as much noise as they could, and pressing on to see everybody that stepped from a chair; the flare of links and torches, and the general uproar, would have been too much for my rustic senses, but for the greatness of the occasion, and the supporting presence of my aunt and cousins. With them I passed over the carpet extending from the gutter in front of the house to the hall-door, guarded by men with torches and staves, to light the company and keep off the mob, through the row of servants within, who announced us to the ladies of the family at the entrance of the ball-room. They were Lady Tracy, Miss Tracy, and Miss Agnes Tracy—tall, bony, plain women, every one of them, with looks at once hard and sharp; and thanks to the rouge and gummed curls, nobody could have guessed which was the oldest. I had never seen them in my life before, yet the whole three gave me a stare of amazement, which I am sure they did not mean, for the Tracys were well-bred people; but they recovered their composure the next moment, returned our curtsies—I fear mine was awkwardly made—and gave us the usual compliments and thanks for being so good as to honour their house with our presence; on which my aunt assured them that the honour was



done to us; and with all the ceremonies of good-breeding we were shewn to our seats on one of the lines of chairs and sofas ranged against the wall, where the ladies sat, and the gentlemen stood by till most of the company arrived, and the dancing began.

My aunt presented me to all the Tracies, including Sir Edward, who came to make his compliments as soon as we were seated. He was, as I had been told, a tall, fair-complexioned young man, but very thin, like the rest of his family. His hair was quened in the first style, his shoe and knee buckles were set with diamonds, and his ruffles were of the best point. His manner was polite; and he might have been called handsome, for his features were better than those of the ladies; but there was something sad and sour in his face, which I thought very strange for a young man and a baronet; he spoke little to anybody, had a habit of looking watchfully about him; and I afterwards heard my aunt and cousins saying among themselves how very much Sir Edward was altered by his travels, for all the grand doings he had seen and shared in. For the present, they congratulated him on looking so well, and wished him many happy returns of the day. I did my best to follow their example; but the stare the three ladies gave me had not quite gone off my mind when he came up, and Sir Edward's first look fairly threw me off my balance. It was a scowl of uncommon blackness, as if he had suddenly caught sight of somebody who had done him a serious wrong, but it passed as quickly as lightning. I don't think my aunt and cousins noticed it at all, they were so occupied with their own manners and the incoming company.

I was duly presented; Sir Edward spoke to me as he did to the rest, but in a lower tone; then went to do his devoirs to other ladies, but from all ends of the room I could see him stealthily watching me. The thought of that made me unhappy, in spite of the gay dresses and the fine people who filled the room. All the *élite* of Gloucester were there; my kindly aunt and cousins took both pride and pleasure in pointing them out to me: it was not thought rude in my young days, but rather a sign of distinction. They shewed me Lady Sarah in diamonds and brocade; how black she was, and how well her hair suited the quened curls! They also shewed me a tall handsome young officer, then called Lieutenant C——, and supposed to be an admirer of Miss Agnes Tracy. There were a great many more notables, whom I have forgotten. They introduced me to some, but none of them looked at me as the Tracies had done; and I felt quite reassured when Cousin Alice whispered: "Do you know, Sophy, that Sir Edward has lost his heart to you; he looks at you from all quarters. Methodist as your mother is, I think she would get over the ball for such a conquest."

Of course I was flattered by the fact of Sir Edward looking at me from all quarters, as any country girl of seventeen would have been. I had not lost my heart to him. I am certain it never could have gone that way; but he was the great man of that society—which seemed to my inexperience the grandest in the world—the owner of an estate, and a baronet. It was no fancy of Cousin Alice; he did look at me from time to time, but not as if he wished to be observed. I couldn't help looking at him in return from behind my fan, the only way proper for a young lady; but when my attention was diverted by the entrance of a great Gloucester lady and her seven daughters—they were all immensely large women, but I have forgotten their names—Sir Edward was suddenly missed out of the room. I saw his mother looking for him; I heard my aunt say: "What has taken him off!" but in a minute or two he was there again, making compliments, receiving congratulations, and casting watchful, stealthy glances at me. Under any other circumstances, I would not have liked them. I did

not like to think of the fierce frown he had cast on me at first sight, but my experienced cousin had assured me of a conquest; and it was with a flutter of girlish vanity that I saw the young baronet, after leading Lady Sarah and some of the more distinguished guests through as many minuets, approach and request the honour of my hand for the next. There was nothing ill-natured or envious in my cousins; Alice adjusted my tucker, Grace whispered not to forget that I preferred the *Minuet de Mecklenbourg*. My aunt gave permission for me to dance, which Sir Edward asked in due form; and to my own great amazement and greater pride, I was conducted by the bowing baronet to the clear space in the midst of the room where the dancing went on.

Minuets would be thought a dull business by young folks of these days, but they did not derange the quened curls, or put one's sac out of the proper folds; they did not take up much room either. The clear space I have mentioned was a chalked strip in the centre of the ball-room, extending almost from the entrance-door to one at the further end which opened on the orangery—an old-fashioned kind of greenhouse, with steps leading down to the garden, for the ground on which Tracy House stood was a perfect slope. The orangery was well kept, and specially decorated for the ball, the shrubs and plants being arranged so as to form a kind of arbour, with two tables in it—one with Sir Edward's birthday presents, set forth in full display, and the other furnished with light refreshments for the ladies who went there to get cool after dancing, and survey the gifts, which, being mostly from the Tracies' rich relatives, were thought well worth seeing. I mention these things that you may understand what followed. In the meantime, I of course preferred the *Minuet de Mecklenbourg*. The orchestra, consisting of two hautboys, and as many violins, were set to the appropriate air. I believe my step would have satisfied the dancing-master in his most scrupulous moment. Cousin Grace smiled approvingly on me from her distant seat, and I heard Lieutenant C—— say to his partner, Miss Agnes: "From the country, you say; how gracefully she dances!"

We had finished the minuet, and I expected Sir Edward to conduct me to my seat, but instead of doing so, he led me towards the orangery.

"You have not seen my birthday presents yet, nor our two lemon-trees, which are counted among the wonders of Gloucester. All the rest of the ladies have seen them; come and see them too;" and without waiting for my answer, he opened the door, and led me in. I was young, utterly unacquainted with society at the time, and greatly delighted with the notice and honour shewn me by the young baronet. Besides, I had seen other ladies go into the orangery with their partners, and though doubtful of what my aunt would say, and rather surprised to see nobody there but ourselves, I found the birthday presents exceedingly engaging. There were silver cups, point ruffles, embroidered night-caps, and snuff-boxes of uncommon shapes and workmanship. Sir Edward shewed them all, told me the names and residences of the titled relations from whom they had come, shewed me the two lemon-trees also—they were nearly as tall as myself—and made several flattering comparisons between me and the surrounding flowers. From seeing him in the ball-room, I never could have imagined he could talk so agreeably. The sadness and sourness were gone from his face; they were gone from my memory too, and I never observed where we were going, till he opened the door, and led me out upon a kind of balcony, from which a flight of stone steps led down to the garden. They had an iron railing, but the balcony had none; it was a dangerous condition to keep the place in, but the Tracies never spent any money on their house that they could help; and I felt half frightened when

the full moonlight—it was the clearest winter weather I ever saw—shewed me the unguarded precipice and the wide lonely garden below. At the same moment, I saw Sir Edward rapidly turn an outside key in the door behind us, and then turn to me. Before I knew what to say, he seized me by the arm, and drew me towards the unguarded edge. "Look down," said he. "Is it not cold and quiet in the moonlight? That garden would be a lovely place for a grave."

"Let us go in," said I, turning from him in mortal terror, for his face had changed to something like the look of a vicious dog about to spring, and I could hear the grinding of his teeth.

"No, we won't go in," he growled, in the same surly tone; "we won't go in till you tell me what brings you here to mock me, after what you did in breaking your promise, and sending me to the madhouse. Yes, it was you that did it all; I was kept under their keepers and strait-waistcoats for nearly three years by your doings; but I'll have revenge. I made this for the keeper one night, but it will do for you."

He had fumbled something out of his dress-coat pocket, which I could not see; I think the terror and confusion stupified me for the moment, and as he spoke, I felt a noose of cord thrown quickly round my neck, and then a violent push, which sent me over the edge of the balcony, while he held the end of the cord in one hand, clutched the iron railing with the other, and planted his feet firmly on the steps. My escape was predestinated, I suppose, for, in the act of falling, my toes caught in a projecting ledge of wall. I never knew the value of life till that moment. With the energy of despair, I flung out my arms, and fortunately caught one of the rails some distance below where he stood, and held on to the ledge of wall with my feet. He saw my advantage. How horrible his face looked in the moonlight, the eyes glaring, and the teeth gnashing, like one possessed.

"Ah, you won't get off; I'll hang you, you perjured wretch; you won't send me to the madhouse again." That growl was given in an undertone, and I saw him winding the cord round his hand to tighten it. It was so tight already, that I could utter no sound, and the dreadful feeling of suffocation was on me, but one last expedient for life suddenly occurred to me. With the only hand I had free, I seized the noose, tore the skin off neck and fingers, but succeeded in loosening it sufficiently to utter one scream. I'll never forget the sound of that cry; it must have startled the half of Gloucester. The next thing I remember is a crash of breaking glass, the figure of a man rushing out from the greenhouse, and the sensation of falling. After that, all was blank, till I found myself lying in a bed in Lady Tracy's house, with my aunt, my cousins, and a number of female servants busy about me, strange sounds of confusion coming up from the ground-floor, and above them all, shouts of curses and imprecations in the voice of Sir Edward.

I had been saved from him and his noose by the gallantry and promptitude of young Lieutenant C—, who had seen us go into the orangery, heard the cry, and rushed to the rescue. By cutting the cord at once with his penknife, he had let me fall from no great height on a smooth sward which happened to lie below, and then, with the help of some other gentlemen, secured the maniac, for such Sir Edward was by this time, and such I am sorry to say he continued till the end of his days, and they were lengthened out more than forty years after. The explanation of his conduct towards myself seems to be this: the young man's brain had never been strong; indeed, I believe there was madness in the Tracy family, and under that early disappointment at Cambridge it had given way. The grand tour and the brilliant receptions were merely his clever

relatives' account of the time he passed in a private asylum. The dress I had bought from Mrs Jenkins was traced to the clergyman's house in Somersetshire, which happened to be the family living bestowed on his college tutor for taking the painter's daughter so completely out of his way; in fact, it had been worn by her at one of the Cambridge balls, and disposed of as an article too gay for her married days. My resemblance to her in figure and complexion made the dress suit me so well, it probably made the resemblance more perfect; hence the surprised stare of the three ladies, and the illusion which had finally upset Sir Edward's reason, and endangered my life.

I need not tell you that we got home to the Cathedral Close as soon as we could. The ball had been brought to a premature conclusion; the whole company had heard my scream, and the affair could not be kept from becoming public. We were therefore obliged to let my mother know all about it; indeed, every one of us, and particularly myself, considered it a special judgment on our deceit and disobedience. Worthy woman, she first gave thanks for my providential deliverance, then came to Gloucester with all speed, and gave us a sound lecture, which doubtless would have been longer and more impressive, if Lieutenant C— had not politely called at the time to inquire after my health; and my mother being a gentlewoman as well as a Methodist, took the opportunity to make suitable acknowledgment, and ask him to visit at our house. The lieutenant did visit us in the course of the same winter. He had never been engaged to Miss Agnes Tracy, who, by the by, lived and died an old maid, like her aunt. My father and mother both thought him sensible, and hoped to make him serious. He certainly did a good deal to please them in the way of politeness to the old ladies, and listening to the preachers, and succeeded so well, that they gave me leave to marry him on the very day twelvemonth in which he had saved my life. Now, there is the true cause of my dislike to look at dancing ever since I was seventeen; the unrailled balcony and the moonlight night, Sir Edward and his noose, came back with every sight of it. It may have been folly, but I never could get over it throughout my long life. It was not a story that one could tell to everybody, so I kept it to myself; but the Tracys are all dead and gone now. A well-to-do tradesman owns their house in Gloucester, but he is a person of strict religious views, and the last fashionable assembly ever given there was my only ball.

#### MEDIEVAL BLONDINS.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the wonders of Blondin, it is curious to observe how far the old adage, 'Nothing new under the sun,' is maintainable in the world of rope-dancers. Let us look back among the old chroniclers and annalists, and see to what extent Blondin was anticipated—perhaps outdone.

Walking and dancing on the tight-rope were known at least as far back as the time of the Romans; but we will keep to the periods of which we have better records. Froissart describes the festivities which took place at Paris in 1385, on occasion of the marriage of Charles VI. with Isabel of Bavaria. Among the exhibitors was a rope-dancer. 'He tyed a cord upon the hiest house on the brydge of St Mychell over all the houses, and the other ende was tyed to the hiest tower of Our Ladye's Church [cathedral of Notre Dame]; and as the Quene passed by and was in the great strete called Our Ladye's Strete [Rue Notre Dame], this sayd Master, with two brynnynge candells in hys handes, issued out of a littel stage that he had made on the heycht of Our Ladye's tower, syngynge as he went upon the corde all alonge the great strete, so that all that sawe hym hadde marvaille how it might be; and he bore still in hys handes the two brynnynge



candells, so that he might be sene all over Parys, and two myles without the cite.' The different editors of Froissart have disputed whether the man is described as *sliding* or *walking* on the rope; but all agree that there is no mention of a balancing-pole. From an old manuscript preserved in the College of Arms, we learn the following particulars in reference to certain feats performed at Richmond (in Surrey) on the occasion of the marriage of Prince Arthur with Catherine of Aragon, November 1501. 'Upon the outside of the walls'—we modernise the orthography—'directly under the windows, were bars and void space for jousts; also, there were set up and raised two high and great posts, with crosses, these posts first set and driven in the ground. Over the crosses was a great cable stretched steadfastly, and drawn with a wheel, and stayed upon both the sides with divers cords, so that the sight of it was like unto the ridging of an house. Upon this frame and cable ascended and went up a Spaniard, the which shewed there many wonders, and delicious points of tumbling and dancing, and other sleights. First, he went up unto the frame (and a certain stay in his hand), to the number of forty feet, somewhat aslope; and when he came to the height, left his stay, and went upon the cable, sometime on pattens, sometime with tennis-balls, sometime with fetters of iron, dancing with bells, and leaping many leaps upon the said cable both forward and backward. He played sometime with a sword and a buckler: eftsoon he cast himself suddenly from the rope, and hung by the toes; sometime by the teeth; most marvellously and with greatest sleight and cunning that any man could possibly exercise or do. After these long beholding, with other goodly sports, the King's Grace and noble company entered again through these pleasant gardens of his lodging of Richemond unto Evensong, and so unto his supper.'

A writer in *Notes and Queries* has drawn attention to an old engraving, dated 1550, representing a rope-walker at Venice. The rope is fastened at one end to the top of the tower of St Mark's, and at the other end to a raft moored on the water. The angle is so excessively steep, that the difficulty of ascending or descending must have been very great, if the engraving is to be trusted.

London has had its full share of such displays. Strutt notices a tight-rope exhibition which took place in the time of Edward VI.: 'There was a rope as great as the cable of a ship, stretched in length from the battlements of Paul's steeple, with a great anchor at one end, fastened a little before the Dean of Paul's house-gate; and when his majesty approached near the same, there came a man, a stranger, a native of Aragon, lying on the rope with his head forward, casting his arms and legs abroad, running on his breast on the rope from the battlements to the ground, as if it had been an arrow out of a bow, and stayed on the ground. Then he came to his Majesty, and kissed his foot; and so, after certain words to his Highness, he departed from him again, and went upwards upon the rope till he came over the midst of the churchyard, where he, having a rope about him, played certain mysteries on the rope, as tumbling, and casting one leg from the other. Then took he the rope, and tied it to the cable, and tied himself by the right leg a little space beneath the wrist of the foot, and hung by one leg a certain space, and after recovered himself again with the said rope, and unknit the knot, and came down again.' This is something similar to Blondin's slack-rope *addendum* to his tight-rope.

On the occasion of the entry of Philip and Mary into London in 1554, after their marriage, there was a man who, in a similar way, slid down a rope from the top of St Paul's, head first, without aid of hand or foot. The spire of old St Paul's was higher than the cross of the present structure; but the rope appears

to have been fastened to some battlement, at a less fearful elevation. By what process these men went *up* the rope after the descent, whether by climbing or walking, is not clearly stated. Holinshed records that the unlucky man who exhibited before Philip and Mary was killed soon afterwards while attempting a similar feat.

Jacob Hall was a famous rope-dancer in the time of Charles II. His feats appear to have been elegant rather than wonderful; he was a 'pretty man,' in high favour with the court-ladies. Dryden, about the same time, speaks of a female rope-dancer who

With two heavy baskets drags a dance.

Evelyn, in his *Diary*, under date September 15, 1657, enters a little more into detail concerning a rope-dancer who achieved feats quite as wonderful as those of Blondin, though different in kind: 'Going to London with some company, we stopt in to see a famous rope-dancer called the Turk. I saw even to astonishment the agility with which he performed. He walked barefooted, taking hold by his toes only of a rope *almost perpendicular*, and without so much as touching it with his hands; he danced *blindfold* on the high rope, and with a boy of twelve years old tied to one of his feet about twenty feet beneath him, dangle as he danced, yet he moved as nimbly as if he had been a feather. Lastly, he stood on his head on the top of a very high mast, danced on a rope that was very slack, and finally flew down the perpendicular on his breast, his head foremost, his legs and arms extended.'

The eighteenth century had similarly its quota of rope-dancers. Mr Morley, in his curious *History of Bartholomew Fair*, mentions two damsels who, with trousers on and petticoats off, stood on their heads on a tight-rope. On another occasion, 'the famous Mr Barnes danced on a rope with two children at his feet.' Some years after this, when the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields was finished, an adventurous Italian named Violante descended from the steeple, head-foremost, on a rope stretched thence across St Martin's Lane to the Royal Mews. He was honoured with the presence of some of the royal family. It would appear that his wife became equally distinguished for the art. In an old volume of the *Caledonian Mercury* for 1736, is a curious paragraph to the following effect: 'While Allan Ramsay was preparing his playhouse, an Italian female rope-dancer, named Signora Violante, performed in Edinburgh and some other Scotch towns. It was asserted that she danced a minuet on the rope as well as it could be done on the floor—danced on a board placed loosely on the rope—danced on the rope with two boys fastened to her feet—danced with two swords at her feet; the rope being no thicker than penny whip-cord.' Those little fellows, the 'two boys fastened to her feet,' must have had a queer life of it.

The wheelbarrow trick of M. Blondin is not more new than the rest; for Mr Morley quotes an old Bartlemy Fair placard concerning a 'great Italian Scaramouch, who will dance on a rope, with a wheelbarrow before him, with two children and a dog in it, and with a duck on his head; who sings to the company, and causes much laughter.' Later in the century there were several exhibitors who had become proficient in sliding down a rope; they had a board fastened to the breast, with a groove running down the centre of the outer side; this groove was placed on the rope, and the man, having established his balance, started off with great rapidity, head downwards. The *élite* among these performers not only avoided touching the rope with their hands, but blew trumpets and fired off pistols during their descent. One of these men performed this feat at Hertford in 1750, descending from the steeple of All Saints Church. Another, about the same time, was 'the famous Cadman,' who belonged to the unlucky class represented

by poor Scott the diver. He was killed by his rope-achievements at Shrewsbury. His cord stretched from Shrewsbury Church tower across the Severn to the meadows on the other side. The epitaph on Cadman's tombstone tells the cause of his death in a very straightforward, matter-of-fact way :

'Twas not for want of skill,  
Or courage, to perform the task, he fell :  
No, no—a faulty cord, being drawn too tight,  
Hurried his soul on high to take her flight,  
Which hid the body here beneath good-night.

A 'copy of verses,' in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, recording Cadman's sad fate, immortalised some of his exploits in the following way :

The proudest spire in Salop's lofty town  
Safely he gains, and glides as safely down ;  
Then soars again aloft, and downward springs,  
Swift as an eagle, without aid of wings ;  
Hangs suspended by his toe :  
Undazzled, views th' inverted chasm below :  
Invites with beat of drum brave volunteers ;  
Defies Jack Spaniard, nor invasion fears.

It was a volunteering time, and the poet managed to bring the volunteers and the rope-dancer together in his verses.

There is one matter which, so far as we know, belongs exclusively to the seventeenth century, and leaves our present age far behind—this is a *horse walking on a tight-rope*.

Mr Morley speaks of a man at Bartholomew fair, in 1778, who exhibited serpents dancing to music on a silken rope ; this we can understand, but we want strong evidence concerning the horse, and all we have is the following. When Malcolm was collecting materials for his *Londinium Redivivum*, he obtained much curious matter relating to the manners and customs of other countries, which he afterwards published under the title *Manners and History of Europe*. One of his scraps relates to certain festivities at Venice on St Mark's Day, 1680 ; when the doge, the senate, the imperial ambassador, and about fifty thousand citizens, witnessed the extraordinary performances of an exhibitor. 'Adorned in a tinsel riding-habit, having a gilt helmet upon his head, and holding in his right hand a lance, and sitting upon a white horse, with a swift pace, he ambled up a rope, six hundred feet long, fastened from the quay to the top of St Mark's Tower. When he had arrived half-way, his tinsel coat fell off, and he made a stand, and, stooping his lance submissively, saluted the doge, who was sitting in the palace, and flourished the banner three times over his head. Then resuming his former speed, he went on, and with his horse, entered the tower where the bell hangs, and presently returning on foot, he climbed up to the highest pinnacle of the tower, where, sitting on the golden angel, he flourished his banner again several times. This performed, he descended to the bell-tower, and then, taking horse, rode down again to the bottom in the like manner as he had ascended.'

Knowing how safely a mule will carry a burden along a narrow precipice of rock, we must not at once disbelieve this Venetian exploit ; yet it would be satisfactory to know a little more of the equestrian Blondin and his wonderful horse.

But even this affair of the horse is not the most marvellous. The reader must prepare himself to believe that the massive and ponderous elephant may be indoctrinated with the mysteries of rope-dancing. Nothing of the kind has been known in recent times ; but there are so many allusions to the matter by classical writers, that we are hardly justified in utterly ignoring them. Although details are not given, the general tenor is as follows : 'According to Pliny, at the spectacles given by Germanicus, it was not an uncommon thing to see elephants hurl javelins in

the air, and catch them in their trunks, fight with each other as gladiators, and then execute a Pyrrhic dance. Lastly, they danced upon a rope ; and their steps were so practised and certain, that four of them traversed the rope, bearing a litter which contained one of their companions, who feigned to be sick. This feat of dancing or walking upon a rope might perhaps be doubted if it rested merely upon the testimony of a single author ; but the practice is confirmed by many ancient writers of authority, who agree with Pliny that the elephants trained at Rome would not only walk along a rope forward, but retire backward with equal precision. Seneca describes an elephant, who, at the command of his African keeper, would kneel down and walk upon a rope. Suetonius also mentions that an elephant, in the presence of the emperor Galba, climbed up an inclined rope to the roof of the theatre, and descended in the same way, bearing a litter. Dion gives a similar testimony to the extraordinary power of so heavy an animal to walk along a rope without any balance—a docility which is the more wonderful when we bear in mind that one of the strongest instincts which the elephant possesses is that which impels him to experiment upon the stability of every surface which he is required to cross before he will trust his body to the chance of breaking down the support which is prepared for him.'

The four elephants on a rope (or ropes?), carrying in a litter their friend who pretended to be ill, is a feat that out-Blondins all that we know in the present degenerate age.

#### LEIGH HUNT'S CORRESPONDENCE.

In the whole range of English literature, there is no man more loved by those who are acquainted with his writings than Leigh Hunt. Whatever else may be wanting in them, the rare faculty of attaching reader to author is certainly there. In most cases, when a writer is extravagantly admired by a few persons, but unacknowledged by the world, his disciples lose their tempers in defending him. They are irritated by the stupidity or malignity of the public. The lovers of Leigh Hunt, however, are not angry ; and his teaching would indeed be thrown away upon them if they were. 'There is nothing worth contesting here below,' writes he, 'except who shall be kindest to one another.' The world is three centuries off from the time when it shall open its arms, at any width, to one like him. At present, it is only the young who appreciate him, or who (alas!) are blind to his defects. They clasp hands with him across his pages as with a charming friend ; they would have liked to have known him in the flesh, they are sure, and would not have been afraid.

To how many glorious writers does he introduce them, whom, but for him, they would scarcely have had a chance of knowing ! How catholic he was ; how admirably apt to point out what is best in each, and to reject the bad ! The two little volumes, *Imagination and Fancy*, and *Wit and Humour*, have been to many a youth the keys of an intellectual paradise. If his philosophy could be said to be antagonistic to any other, it was to that of the *nil admirandum* school ; for he admired all things written that are admirable, from the works of Archbishop Leighton to those of Rabelais. What he loved himself, he was eager that all should love.

Nor must we forget how much we owe him upon his own account ; for his *Indicator*—than which no pleasanter volume of essays (Messrs Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith notwithstanding) was ever printed—and for his *Poems*, which, as any poet will gladly witness, are far, far better than the booksellers hold them to be.

The *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*\* will probably share the fate of all that has been published of his during life—it will be perused with infinite interest and affectionate sympathy by his admirers, and be neglected by the public at large. The reason of this is truthfully stated by the editor of the volumes in question: 'Although attracting the personal affection as well as the admiration of those readers who took to him at all, Leigh Hunt still spoke with so much speciality of idea and expression, that the circle always proved to be comparatively limited. The intensity of the fervour with which his writing was received invariably gave an idea of a wider success than was ultimately realised.' He was often, as it seemed, upon the point of making his fortune, but the venture always ended in a deficit. He was totally unfitted for the management of any sort of business. 'It was no affectation when he declared himself entirely incompetent to deal with the simplest question of arithmetic. The very commonest sum was a bewilderment to him. He learned addition, in order that he might be fitted for his place in a public office. It was a born incapacity, similar to that of people who cannot distinguish the notes of music, or the colours of the prism. Perpetually reproached with it, very conscious of his mistakes, he took his deficiency to heart, and with the emphatic turn of his temperament, increased it by exaggerating his own estimate of it. Thus, he regarded himself as a sort of idiot in the handling of figures, and he was consequently incapacitated for many subjects which he could handle very well when they were explained to him in another form. A secondary consequence was the habit, acquired very early, of trusting to others. His wife was clever in the special handling of arithmetic, a fact which he knew and admired. She had been brought up by a mother who was a thrifty housewife, and thus became in all domestic matters a business agent for a man who trusted her less like a husband than a child.'

His want of punctuality was excessive, nay, absolutely ludicrous. When a clerk in the War Office [*fancy Captain Pen* in the War Office!] he could scarcely command leisure for breakfast, although he seldom reached his desk in time. On one occasion, he was to visit his friend, Charles Robertson, in Lincolnshire, and the young ladies rose early to make his breakfast before he went off, but he was too late for the coach. The next day, he rose in the same manner; he was again too late. But that night he slept at the Golden Cross, and managed to commence his journey on the third day. Yet a friend who knew him well justly remarked, that "procrastination" was not the proper term for the habit; he did not "put off;" it was not entirely the enjoyment of the passing moment that made him defer exertion; it was rather that he became so completely absorbed in the immediate occupation of the moment, whatever it might be—whether it were conversation, music, study, or hard work, that he had no faculty for noting the lapse of time.

On another occasion, writing to his affianced bride from an inn during a journey to Nottinghamshire, he says: 'I happened to meet in the coach, when I set off on Tuesday mor'—

'*Marianne* (lifting up two bright astonished eyes) On Tuesday morning, sir? You must mean Monday morning, sir.

*H. Madam*, you must excuse me; I mean Tuesday morning.

*M. Why*, sir, you took leave of us on Monday morning.

*H. Yes*, madam, and the coach took leave of me.

*M. Why*, sir, the coach went off at eight.

*H. (with much sorrow)* Yes, madam.

*M. You were too late*, then, sir?

*H. (with much sorrow)* Yes, madam.

*M. And lost half your fare?*

*H. Yes*, madam.

*M. A guinea and a half?*

*H. Yes*, madam.

*M. Well*, sir, you have only paid a guinea and a half for a lesson of prudence.

*H. True*, madam; some pay as much for a lesson on the fiddle. Which is the more useful of the two?

*M. But*, my dear sir, why did you not return to Titchfield Street?

*H. Why*, my dear madam, there is something inexpressibly foolish in going twice on the same errand in vain. I took a place at the White Horse, in Fetter Lane, so I slept in Gray's Inn to be in time next morning.'

Marianne doubtless felt as we do, that it was quite impossible to be angry with Leigh Hunt. One of the very things, indeed, which most unfitted him for the battle of life, endeared him to all who knew him—namely, his conscientious kindness. Before leaving his cottage at Berkenham, and coming to reside in town, he writes thus to the local house-agent: 'As to the cottage itself, Mr H. can by no means reconcile it to his conscience to let it during the winter. If anybody should be inclined to take it for the summer, which is not likely, considering it is unfurnished and out of the road of coaches, well and good; but it is no more fit to stand rain and wind than a house of paper; and at such times, Mr H. would rather keep it at the expense of his purse, than let it at the expense of his decency.' These very volumes prove how much time, that he ill could spare, was spent in writing letters to the unhappy and the afflicted, conveying the most comforting and affectionate sympathy; and that, too, when his fingers ached with the labour they had already undergone. Notwithstanding the books of his own that might be on hand (and the printing-press—a yawning dragon demanding his virgin thoughts—was ever at his heels), he had still advice, suggestions, and the most encouraging praise and appreciation for other writers far less pressed than he. To Miss Kent he writes: 'Until you told me the other day, I never gathered from your letters that you were at all advanced in your tree book, much less that you had nearly done it. So, partly from illness in the first instance, and partly from occupation with Wishing-caps afterwards, I have only got the following memorandums. I send them to you, rather to shew you I had been thinking about the work, than from any hope of their being useful.'

'Preface, vitality of trees—the leaves, their lungs, &c. Many have thought they have sensation; the Arabians, in their imagination, even gave them a language. Trees once furnished altogether the habitations, meat and drink, and clothes of some nations, still supply us with medicine, furniture, houses, food, ships, and instruments of numberless sorts. Furnished wood for the statues of gods formerly, as they do even now for those of saints in the south; were dedicated to gods, and rendered the abodes of wood-nymphs. The insides of our cathedrals are supposed to have been suggested by those noble twilight walks which are formed by stately groves.'

He adds to this a long list of authors to be quoted, and a beautiful description of many trees. Now this, be it observed, was not mere information communicated to a friend, but the giving away of time and thought, which were in his case not only so much money, but the means of procuring daily bread; for this true gentleman, so rich in kindly courtesies, in knowledge, in accomplishments of all kinds, was miserably poor. 'His whole life,' says his biographer, 'was one of pecuniary anxiety;' and in illustration of this, he tells us things which, considering the sensitive nature of the victim, are about the saddest we have

\* The *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*. Edited by his eldest Son, Smith & Elder.



ever heard. Matters were sometimes so bad with him that not even a servant could be retained, and he had to help to nurse the child. Doubts often beset him as to whether there would be bread enough for his family from day to day; 'necessity to borrow shillings to get a dinner or a tea with, constant dunnings at the door, withholdings of the family linen by the washerwoman, the sight of my children in rags (except the one that I must send out), and twenty other mortifications and distresses profound.'

'You know,' writes he to one of his most intimate friends, 'how many children I have. They are constantly beside me, without my having the least hope of leaving them a farthing. All I pray for is, to be able to work for them till my last moment.' My state of health is so bad that I do not tell my nearest connections how much I suffer from it. I have constantly a bad head, often a bad side, always a leg swollen and inflamed; in consequence, when I am entertaining others in company, such a flow of melancholy thoughts comes over me, that their laughter, if they knew it, would be changed to tears. I never hear a knock at the door, except one or two which I know, but I think somebody is coming to take me away from my family. Last Friday, I was sitting down to dinner, having just finished a most agitating morning, when I was called away by a man who brought an execution into my house for forty shillings. It is under circumstances like this that I always write, and I have more troubles, and great ones. If you ask me how it is I bear all this, I answer that I love nature and books, and think well of the capabilities of human kind. I have known Shelley, I have known my mother, I know my own good intentions, which, of course, millions partake, and I have other friends who partake of Shelley's kindness, though they have not his means, and who console me for disappointments from others I thought such. And so, dear, pardon and think the best of me and my sorry letters, and come and advise me as soon as you can.—Ever truly your obliged and affectionate L. H.'

Conceive what such poverty as this must have been to such a man! He could but seldom afford himself even that one cheap innocent pleasure—which to him was Happiness—a book. As for listening to the generous whispers of his own heart, it was not to be thought of. Once, when he has got his pension, and has only one creditor, and things are a little straight with him, he writes: 'Upon the strength of all this, I found myself enabled yesterday to give a few shillings to a poor man in charity, a luxury that I have not had, God knows how long, and I seemed in consequence to sit in my chair taller and nobler.' As for hospitality, to which such a nature as his was of course inclined, 'for many years,' says he, 'I had not even a crust, as it were, with which even to greet a friend, or a penny for coach-hire wherewith to seek him.'

These revelations are very painful, but they are absolutely requisite to explain what would without them seem to be a want of proper spirit and independence. Most men will prefer poverty to humiliation, so long as they themselves are the only sufferers; but when wife and children are also in the scale, the case is different. Leigh Hunt was obliged to ask for scraps from the tables of men who were infinitely his inferiors; pensions from Whig officials, permission to write from editors, and favours of all kinds from coarse and vulgar hands. Lord Melbourne was not a Mæcenæ, nor anything like it. 'The Palfrey,' writes he, 'is a very pretty lively piece, and contains many very quaint and clever passages. In the concluding paragraph, you have made Sir Guy and Sir Grey leave all they possessed to Sir William, long before any man in England could make a will of landed property at all.' If Leigh Hunt had been in his lordship's place, in what a different

manner would such a mistake have been pointed out to a pension-seeking poet, old and poor! The letters of Lord John Russell and Macaulay, on the other hand, are all that, for the sake of the writers, we would wish them to be. To the latter, Leigh Hunt flees for sympathy under the stupid insults of Macvey Napier, to whom, as editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, the great essayist had introduced him. The following sentence forms part of the editorial letter. 'Your phrase, "chatty" [in reference to a proposed article], rather alarms me, for, to say truth, and that in the most friendly spirit, the prevalence of colloquial expressions, nay, of some that are positively vulgar, in the style of an accomplished scholar, who, too, has written many admirable, some exquisite verses, has exceedingly surprised me, and made me sometimes apprehensive of the durability of our connection. [Imagine the proprietor of this esquipedalian penny-a-lining style dictating to the author of the *Indicator*!] For example, the paltry word "bit" occurred above a dozen times in your last article. . . . If any book or subject occurs to you on which you could write an article of the above-mentioned length, in an amusing but gentlemanlike (!) tone and style, &c. &c.'

Upon the receipt of this elegant epistle, Hunt writes to Macaulay to know what he ought to do, or not do. 'I TRUST I have irritated him somehow, in some way for which I cannot account, unless it be in the cheerful and hearty endeavour I have made to avoid all cause of offence; for I should be loath to think I had written things in my articles, as he pretty plainly intimates, not merely vulgar, but unlike a gentleman. . . . As to his thinking such words as "bit" vulgar, and his not knowing how to discern animal spirits from want of breeding, they are mistakes which I should not wish to characterise by his own phraseology; but, indeed, not being personally acquainted with him, and at the same time being in a delicate position with regard to his authority in the *Review* (between the tone and nature of his objections, and my own—I must get the word out—*poverty*), I feel fairly at a loss in what way to answer him. Is he a very quarrelsome, or a very dull man?'

Alas for poor Leigh Hunt! How one wishes that he had had money enough to afford to kick him!

In addition to the indignities and hardships to which his extreme poverty subjected him, there were dreadful calamities at home; not only death in the house—for with so large a domestic circle as Leigh Hunt's, that could hardly be otherwise—but a disgrace to the family. The violence of conduct and irregularity of one of his sons rendered the lad's stay at home intolerable. 'At a very tender age, and in a very curious manner, he contracted a habit of intemperance. Indeed, he seemed to be devoid of any faculty of self-restraint, and this want of control exhibited itself in the most alarming forms. On several occasions he attacked his brothers with knives; on one, actually stabbing his third brother, who was only saved from a deadly blow by one of his other brothers, who saw the danger, and thrust him down from the knife. It was after this that, in order to extort some indulgence from his mother, whose state of health has already been mentioned, he held the carving-knife over the soft part of the head of an infant brother.' To complete this sad domestic picture, Mrs Leigh Hunt was almost all her life an invalid.

Upon a review, indeed, of Leigh Hunt's entire career, we are inclined to believe that the most careless and pleasant time of it was really that couple of years which he passed in Surrey jail. This punishment, in addition to a fine of £500, the youthful editor of the *Examiner* had incurred through critically comparing the flattery of the *Morning Post*, which had termed the Prince Regent 'the Mæcenæ of the age,' and 'an Adonis in loveliness,' with the actual facts. Stone walls, however, did not a prison make, in any

severe sense of the word. By fees to the jailer, he obtained many comforts, and even luxuries. His sitting-room was covered with a paper representing a trellis of roses, and opened into a little garden with pinks and roses in it. For exercise, he played at battledore and shuttlecock, and he chronicles how on one occasion he kept up no less than 1220 with his eldest child. He manufactured also 'a composition called ginger-beer, which has all the pleasantness and usefulness of soda-water, without striking cold upon one.' His bower of roses was perpetually visited by very charming people, and among them Wilkie, Haydon, Byron, Brougham, and Barnes.

No man was ever less adapted for political controversy, or more formed for friendship and the amenities of life, than was Leigh Hunt. 'At present,' writes he, during one of his few intervals of prosperity, 'I have made myself a nook to write in of a morning in the corner of the room where Raphael stood as thus: I have taken his place under the print of Shakspeare, in a chair with a table before me, put his bust on it, with a rose-tree at the side towards the door, and filled the outside of the window with geraniums, myrtle, daisies, heartease, and a vase full of gay flowers; so that, with the new spring green in the garden, my books on the right, the picture of Jaques and the Stag under Milton, and two plaster-cast vases, which have just been sent me, on each side of the Mercury on the piano, I have nothing but sights of beauty, genius, and morality all about me.' His delight in the most innocent pleasures was that of a child. 'What do you think,' writes he, from Italy, 'of the finest large grapes exactly a halfpenny a pound? What of eleven of the finest peaches for three-halfpence? Thirty or forty apricots are to be had for three farthings—they are three-halfpence a gallon!' As for books, Leigh Hunt really spent his life among them, more than in the actual world. 'Oh,' exclaims he at Florence, 'how the book advertisements torment me! It seems as if I should get well and happy could I subscribe to Colburn's, and have a fresh book to read every day. However, I must be content with being somewhat better and less unhappy. Should I be going too far in my book expenses to ask you to put in the box Miss Mitford's *Our Village*? The title takes me, and what I hear of it. I long, long, long—oh, how I long to read about an English village again, English meadows, and English woods. The little book you sent the children, with pictures—rural scenes—I have despotically taken to myself, and keep it locked up, that it may not get torn. This is hardly a letter, but I am late with the Review, and if I do not write to-day, I shall not be able to send till Tuesday.—God bless you, prays ever your affectionate friend, L. H.' Hunt had indeed but few pleasures in Italy. His association with Lord Byron was a most unhappy one, and bore most unhappy fruit. Worse than all, it was in Italy, and just after the two dear friends had met, that Shelley was drowned.

'Dearest Bessy,' writes Hunt from Pisa to his sister-in-law, 'your sister is as well as she can be expected to be; so am I and the children. All of which I tell you at once, at the head of my letter, lest the trifling note I am compelled to strike up should affect you still more than it must. Good God! how shall I say it? My beloved friend, Shelley, my dear, my divine friend, the best of friends and of men, he is no more. I know not how to proceed for anguish; but you need not be under any alarm for me. Thank Heaven, the sorrows I have gone through enable me to bear this, and we all endeavour to bear it as well as possible for each other's sake, which is what he, the noble-minded being, would have wished. Would to God I could see him—his spirit, sitting this moment by the table; I think it would no more frighten me than the sight of my baby, whom I kiss, and wonder why he has not gone with him.' Another friend and poet—who has

now a larger and more increasing audience with us than either Hunt or Shelley—had died a little before this, and also in Italy. Here is a weird, ill-boding extract from one of his letters, written while the end was yet some few years off. 'Does Shelley go on telling strange stories of the deaths of kings? Tell him there are strange stories of the deaths of poets—some have died before they were conceived. "How do you make that out, Master Vellum?" Does Mrs S. cut bread and butter as neatly as ever? Tell her to procure some fatal scissors, and cut the thread of life of all to be disappointed poets. Does Mrs Hunt tear linen as straight as ever? Tell her to tear from the book of life all blank leaves. Remember me to them all, to Miss Hunt, and the little ones all.—Your sincere friend, JOHN KEATS.' To Severn, who accompanied Keats to Rome, and tended him in his last days so lovingly, Leigh Hunt thus writes: 'If he [Keats] still cannot bear this [to be told he may get better], tell him, that great poet and noble-hearted man, that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it as our loves do. Or, if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him that we shall never cease to remember and love him; and that, Christian or infidel, the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think all who are of one accord in mind or heart are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somewhere or other again face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he is in everything else; or, whether you tell him the latter or not, tell him the former, and add, that we shall never forget that he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether your friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of your recollections, by and by, that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being. God bless you, dear Severn.—Your sincere friend, LEIGH HUNT.'

Circumstances denied to Hunt himself the power of shewing his love to his friends otherwise than by words, but not one of them ever doubted the genuineness of his affection. To attack him or his was to set able pens and willing fingers at work in his defence. When Southey attacked *Elia's* religion in the *Quarterly*, and, with excessive ill taste, mourned over the fate of little T. H. for not having more orthodox principles instilled into him, Lamb thus replied for self and friend. With regard to religion, he turns the tables on his antagonist, protesting that any spirit of joking he (Lamb) may have upon the subject, he had imbibed from Southey himself, who had all his life made a jest of the Devil. 'You have made wonderfully free with, and been mightily pleasant upon, the popular idea and attributes of him. You have flattered him in prose; you have chanted him in goodly odes; you have been his jester, volunteer laureate, and self-elected court-poet of Beelzebub.' As to Leigh Hunt, he writes: 'Accident introduced me to Mr L. H.'s acquaintance, and the experience of his many friendly qualities confirmed a friendship between us. You, who have been misrepresented yourself, I should hope have not lent an idle ear to the calumnies which have been spread abroad concerning this gentleman. I was admitted to his household for several years, and do most solemnly aver that I believe him to be in his domestic relations as correct as any man. . . . He is not only a man of taste and a poet; better than this, he is one of the most cordial-minded men I ever knew—a matchless fireside companion. I mean not to affront or wound your feelings when I say that in his more genial moods he has often reminded me of you. There is the same air of mild dogmatism, the

same condescending to boyish sportiveness, in both our conversations. . . . L. H. is now in Italy; on his departure to which land, with much regret, I took my leave of him and his little family—seven of them, sir, with their mother—as kind a set of little people (T. H.), and all as affectionate children as ever blessed a parent. Had you seen them, sir, I think you would not have looked upon them as so many little Jonahs, but rather as pledges of the vessel's safety that was to bear such a freight of love. I wish you would read Mr H.'s lines to that same T. H., 'Six years old, during a sickness'—

Sleep breathes at last from out thee,  
My little patient boy—

(they are to be found in the 47th page of *Foliage*), and ask yourself how far they are out of the spirit of Christianity. I have a letter from Italy, received but the other day, into which L. H. has put as much heart, and as many kindly yearnings after old associates and native country, as I think paper can well hold. It would do you no hurt to give that the perusal also.

With such an advocate in Leigh Hunt's favour, it is scarcely necessary for us to 'follow on the same side.' But if any unfriendliness still exists in any bosom against this most unfortunate but noble-minded man, let his own hand remove it. The letter with which we conclude this notice was written by him immediately after the death of his son Swinburne to some near connections who had been estranged: 'You know what took place on Sunday last with my poor little boy. I think if you could see his little gentle dead body, calm as an angel, and looking wise in his innocence beyond all the troubles of this earth, you would agree with me in concluding (especially as you have lost little darlings of your own) that there is nothing worth contesting here below, except who shall be kindest to one another. There seems to be something in these moments, by which life recommences with the survivors: I mean, we seem to be beginning, in a manner, the world again, with calmer, if with sadder thoughts; and wiping our eyes, and readjusting the burden on our backs, to set out anew on our roads, with a greater wish to help and console one another. Pray, let us be very much so, and prove it by drowning all disputes of the past in the affectionate tears of this moment. We cannot be sure that an angel is not now looking at us, and that we shall not bring a smile on his face, and a blessing upon our heads, by shewing him an harmonious instead of a divided family. It is the only picture we can conceive of heaven itself. He was always for settling disputes when he saw them. He shewed this disposition to the last; and though in the errors and frailties common to us all, we may naturally dislike to be taught by one another, we can have no objection to be taught by an angelic little child.'

#### THE MONTH:

##### SCIENCE AND ARTS.

SELENOGRAPHY bids fair to take its place among arts as well as sciences. Professor J. Phillips of Oxford has submitted a scheme to the Royal Society for taking a series of portraits of the moon by what he calls 'eye-drawing.' He would have different observers devote themselves to different portions, working diligently thereat until correct delineations of every part of the lunar surface in all the phases had been taken. Those who know Professor Phillips are aware that he has already made a remarkable drawing of the mountain known to astronomers as *Gassendi*, and that he possesses singular qualifications for the suggested course of observations. He purposes to apply himself

to the work for two years, aided by an excellent telescope, in the hope that other observers will be ready to carry it on. There will be one ready, namely, Mr Warren De la Rue, whose photographs of the moon may be ranked among the highest triumphs of the photographic art. When he first began, from fifteen to thirty seconds were required to take an image of the moon; now, such is the extreme sensibility of his chemical appliances, that he can get a satisfactory image in one second. Even thus, pictures of the moon are far from perfect, but judging from the future by the past, photography will supersede Professor Phillips' eye-drawing before the two years are over. As the president of the Astronomical Society said at their last anniversary meeting on placing the Society's gold medal in Mr De la Rue's hands, 'he had brought to light details of dykes and terraces, and furrows, and undulations on the lunar surface, of which no certain knowledge had previously existed.'

From an interesting paper on the late great solar eclipse, read before the Royal Society by Mr De la Rue, we learn that he has been as successful with solar as with lunar photography. One of his heliographs (sun-pictures) is thirty-six inches diameter. By taking images a few hours apart, it is possible to examine them with the stereoscope, and get thereby a more intimate knowledge of the sun than we have hitherto had, especially as regards inequalities of aspect. It appears to be certain that the facule occupy the highest regions of the sun's photosphere, for they have been seen sailing far above the spots and penumbra. Mr De la Rue has added to his admirable collection of astronomical portraits—we mentioned that of Mars a short time since—an engraving of the last great comet, which equals the preceding portraits in beauty and effect. It is indeed excellent.

The enthusiasm with which Bunsen and Kirchhoff's experiments in spectrum-analysis were received has not subsided; and not a month passes without some further enlargement of the theory and practice of this interesting method of chemical and optical investigation. The consequence is that first conclusions have to be modified or altogether abandoned, and that those experimentalists who thought we were immediately to discover and determine the physical constitution of the sun and its atmosphere, are now made aware that severe labour and logical induction are as essential in using the spectrum-analysis, as in any other process of human invention for the discovery of natural knowledge. M. Fizeau, whose reputation as a physicist ranks among the highest, finds that in burning sodium to produce an intense homogeneous light, the line in the spectrum which appears luminous when soda is burnt, becomes perfectly black on a bright ground. In fact, the whole of the spectrum rays from the red to the violet are luminous excepting the black line in question. This observation opens a wider field of inquiry, and enjoins caution. Meanwhile, those who wish to gain accurate knowledge of what has been already done in this branch of science, will find it in a book just published by Messrs Macmillan, containing Professor Roscoe's translation of Kirchhoff's *Researches on the Solar Spectrum, and the Spectra of the Chemical Elements*. In addition to the two subjects mentioned in the title, the book treats of the reversal of the spectra of coloured flames; the chemical constitution of the solar atmosphere, and the physical constitution of the sun. Professor Kirchhoff is of opinion that, in experimenting on the polarisation of light emitted from the sun, sufficient account has not been taken of the assumed fact, that the mass of



the sun is mainly liquid, forming seas in continual motion. 'That such motions should occur in the solar oceans,' he says, 'seems anything but improbable when we consider the enormous changes of temperature occurring in the solar atmosphere, and the force of the currents which, in consequence, must be produced.'

Naturalists and physiologists have been much interested in the hatching of eggs by the python at the Zoological Gardens, because it appears that here, in the last half of the nineteenth century, a physiological fact occurs which they are quite unable to explain. This fact is the surprising increase of temperature in the great snake, a cold-blooded animal, during the process of incubation, simultaneously with entire abstinence from food, and an unaccelerated circulation. It is a question which they will probably have the means of investigating; for as we hear, the five score pythons will be allowed to grow up in the same cage with their parents, and of these some will perhaps be spared for experimental research. It will be a novelty to many spectators to see how snakelings behave themselves.—Mr Durham has been trying to discover what takes place in the brain during sleep, as he explained in a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution. He bored holes in dogs' skulls, and inserted a piece of glass so as to be able to make observations, and noticed that the brain becomes pale during sleep, owing to the diminished quantity of blood circulating through it, and that on waking, or under the influence of an emotion, it becomes flushed or red in proportion to the amount of excitement. Hence, for repose of the brain and healthful sleep, the blood must cease to circulate actively through it; and to insure this result, there must be an absence of anxiety, and of keen long-continued excitement. We see, in the case of fever-patients, how the continued quick circulation through the brain occasions long periods of sleeplessness. Those readers who wish for more information on this subject than can be conveyed in a lecture, should consult *The Philosophy of Sleep*, published many years ago by Robert Macnish, in which all the phenomena of the subject are discussed.

In a paper read before the Ethnological Society, by Mr G. W. Earl, he describes mounds of cockles found in the Malayan peninsula, the formation of which he ascribes to an ancient diminutive negro race, whose representatives still exist in the scattered families of the Semangs. The size of these mounds may be judged of from the fact, that one of them contains 20,000 tons of shells, concreted together by carbonate of lime acting through long ages. The Chinese, who burn these shells to make lime, have dug away 2000 tons from the heap above mentioned, and made an excavation twenty-five feet deep. In such enormous quantities, Mr Earl sees evidence of a numerous population.—A rumour has been heard of the discovery of another 'ruined city' in Guatemala, which for extent and magnificence surpasses all as yet known in Central America. Here, again, the question of an extinct civilisation arises. In another paper that came before the Ethnological Society, it was shewn on philological grounds that those mysterious American antiquities were the work of the Aztec race. Mr Oliver, in his recent lecture at the Royal Institution, argued that America was peopled by tribes passing from west to east across the neck of land that once traversed Behring's Strait, that plants and animals migrated by the same path, and concluded by stating that, 'taking all the evidence into consideration, the probability is far greater in favour of an Asiatic migration than by an Atlantic continent, and every point in our knowledge confirms this view.'

We all know the large sum which we have to pay annually for the maintenance of our army; it is a prodigious burden. It is some compensation, however, to know that some of the recent increase is not in

vain; for, looking at the question from the sanitary point of view, we find, on comparison of the six years ending with 1860, a marked improvement over the former six. The deaths among the household troops are reduced from 14 in the 1000 to 5; in the cavalry of the line, from 15 to 6; in the royal artillery, from 15 to 7; in the foot-guards, from 21 to 9; in the infantry, from 17 to 8. At Gibraltar, the rate has fallen from 22 to 9; in Canada, from 20 to 10; in Ceylon, from 74 to 27; and in Jamaica, from 128 to 17. Clearly, the army is better cared for than it used to be.

Among inventions recently submitted to the Franklin Institute at Philadelphia, we notice a patent universal square which combines the try-square, the mitre, the T-square, the centre-square for finding the centre of a circle, and the graduated rule. Another is a detector-clock, which, by the absence of certain marks, infallibly betrays a watchman who forsakes his post. Another is a machine which makes envelopes at the rate of thirty thousand a day. Some American inventors, captivated by the remarkable properties of hydrated silica, are calling on the government at Washington to use this indestructible substance in the construction of forts, and public works.—We noticed, a year since, M. Deville's ingenious method for melting and casting platinum in large masses: it appears that a somewhat similar method has been practised for several years in New York in preparing the metal on a large scale for commercial purposes.—In Ohio, one Mr Watson has invented a machine for draining land, which seems entirely to dispense with hand-labour. He fixes a cutter to the ploughshare, which cuts down to the required depth in the subsoil, and forms a proper channel for the flow of water. Besides this, the plough carries a hopper filled with hydraulic cement: this cement flows downwards while the implement is in motion into a spiral conical trowel, which, moving slowly round, leaves behind a complete tube, which requires but a few hours' drying to become a permanent drain. With such a machine as this, the reclamation of new lands ought to proceed rapidly.—In California ingenuity finds scope; for Mr Cole has there shewn that a locomotive may be made to supply the steam for the turning of its own turn-table. A pipe from the steam-chamber to the cylinders, which impart motion to the working-gear of the turn-table, suffices for the operation.

Brother Jonathan has given the world a lesson at his own cost in demonstration of what can be done with iron-plated ships in action. While we have been expending hundreds of thousands sterling in building *Warriors*, and in elaborate scientific experiments at Shoeburyness, he with his rough and ready practice has fenced one of his frigates with a gable of 'railroad iron,' which sank a heavy wooden frigate by jamming in her sides; and built a battery with sides of 'white oak' three feet thick, covered outside with six-inch iron, and inside with thin iron plate. If trustworthy reports of the results of the action can be obtained, naval engineers and architects will have important data for their guidance. Meanwhile, there is matter for consideration in a recent experiment at Shoeburyness, which was undertaken to ascertain whether a thick-sided iron ship could be depended on without an inner support of wood. The decay of wood is so rapid when in contact with iron that it is said the *Warrior* will have to be taken to pieces and rebuilt every seven years, a prospect by no means encouraging for payers of income-tax. Hence the desire to try whether iron alone will suffice. Judging from the experiment above mentioned, it will not; for the massive plates were all loosened from the bolts after five or six shots. A few shots more, and the target would have tumbled to pieces. A suggestion has since been made that the wood of such a ship as the *Warrior* might be protected by placing

between it and the iron plates a fibrous layer, three inches thick, of coir, or of the *Urtica nivea*, a plant which India produces in inexhaustible quantities.

It will perhaps be a surprise to some readers to learn that the Danube Commission, which has now and then been mentioned in newspapers, is a working fact. They have been improving the navigation of the great river, so as to facilitate access to the vast corn-growing countries that border it. In time of flood, the Danube pours 600,000 cubic yards of solid matter—diluvial detritus, as the engineers call it—into the Black Sea every twenty-four hours; and at other times 15,000 cubic yards. As a consequence, shoals are numerous, and at the Sulina mouth (the one most frequented), the depth of water was rarely more than nine feet on the bar. Vessels could only cross it by being lightened at great expense and much vexatious delay. Such was the state of things when, in pursuance of the Treaty of Paris, works were begun in 1858, under direction of Mr C. A. Hartley, chief engineer, to improve the Sulina mouth. As he informs us in a paper read before the Institution of Civil Engineers, in the course of thirty-seven months two piers were built, one on each side of the channel, comprising a total length of 7631 feet, in which 12,500 piles were used, and 200,000 tons of stone, the latter brought from a distance of sixty miles. The results are satisfactory, for the bar has been washed away, and the channel is now 17½ feet deep, and 500 feet wide; and it has been accomplished at a cost 'not exceeding the sum that has been paid in one year only for lightening vessels over the bar.'

A rumour has been heard that the Federal government at Washington are so desirous for quick communication with England, that they are willing to undertake a large share in an attempt to lay down another Atlantic cable. That such a communication will be established some day, no one doubts who is competent to form an opinion; but whether the art of preparing and sinking a telegraph cable is yet sufficiently advanced to insure the integrity of so great a length of wire, is a question—a question soon to be solved, if we judge of the past progress of electro-telegraphy; as a proof that they have an eye upon the West as well as upon the East, congress have voted 100,000 dollars for surveying a telegraph route from San Francisco to the Amoor river, which is to be carried along the land as far as Behring's Strait, and there cross from island to island to the Asiatic continent. As the Russian government is to construct a line from Moscow to the mouth of the Amoor, New York and Petersburg will be able to communicate when all the proposed works shall be complete.

It was in 1837 that Cooke and Wheatstone took out their patents; the first electric telegraph was established in 1839; and now we have in the United Kingdom 14,500 miles of telegraph. There are about 100,000 miles on the continent of Europe, and nearly 50,000 miles in the states of North America. The restoration of a portion of the Red Sea line may be regarded as a fact of hopeful significance: already our Indian telegrams come earlier. The next news will probably be that the line is repaired as far as Aden; and after that, by means of the coast-line to Kurrachee, the swift messages will be flashed without interruption from Calcutta to London, and readers of the morning papers will read every yesterday's news from the far East. It appears, moreover, by late accounts from Egypt, that, to avoid the risk of failure, an attempt is to be made to extend a line from Lower into Upper Egypt, whence it would be carried across the desert to the mouth of the Red Sea. The pacha approves the scheme, and is to keep the Arabs from injuring the wire; and thus we may hope that our sole reliance will not always be upon a single cable resting on the rocky and rugged bottom of a dangerous sea.

### THE SONG OF DEATH.

Ye call me a cruel reaper,  
And say that I love to mow  
The fairest and sweetest blossoms,  
And lay their young beauty low;  
But, oh! if ye knew the heart-ache  
That all who live long must know,  
Ye would hail me a pitying angel,  
Your best friend, and not your foe.  
Ah, yes! I'm a pitying angel of light,  
On a mission of mercy sent;  
And whene'er I see a smile too bright,  
And a heart too innocent,  
Too tender and warm for your world of ice,  
I waft them away into Paradise!

Mine aspect is pale and chilling;  
Cold, cold is my marble kiss;  
But it seals the awful passport  
To a world of eternal bliss.  
Oh! if ye but knew, ye mothers,  
The misery my stroke may spare  
Your babes, I should be the watchword  
Of hope, and not of despair!  
Ah, yes! I'm a pitying angel of light,  
On a mission of mercy sent;  
And whene'er I see a smile too bright,  
And a heart too innocent,  
Too tender and warm for your world of ice,  
I waft them away into Paradise.

O'er a bud of the Bordighiera.\*  
A sweet little maid I passed,  
Going, after long years of school-life,  
To her palmy home at last.  
When all round were weeping and wailing,  
I said to myself, and smiled:  
She'll have holidays in Heaven,  
'Mid the immortal palms, sweet child!  
Ah, yes! I'm a pitying angel of light,  
On a mission of mercy sent;  
And whene'er I see a smile too bright,  
And a heart too innocent,  
Too tender and warm for this world of ice,  
I waft them away into Paradise.

On a delicate orphan flower  
With cold prospects, but heart of fire,  
I breathed in an east-wind, and bore him  
Away to his heavenly Sire,  
While his mother was sobbing in anguish;  
I thought she should weep with joy!  
For 'tis God himself hath provided  
For her poor dear fatherless boy!  
Ay! to hearts like his I'm an angel of light  
On a mission of mercy sent:  
He hath bidden a stormy world good-night,  
And now sleeth in sweet content.  
What has he to do with a world of ice?  
Whose climate and home are in Paradise!

E. D.

\* The Bordighiera is a beautiful spot, celebrated for its palm-trees, in the Rivière de Gênes.

The Editors of *Chambers's Journal* have to request that all communications be addressed to 47 Paternoster Row, London, and that they further be accompanied by postage-stamps, as the return of rejected Contributions cannot otherwise be guaranteed.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.